

# Prevention News

## Venus Williams: Is It Sjogren's Syndrome or Something Else?

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While it took Serena Williams only 49 minutes to score a victory in the third round of the U.S. Open, older sister Venus (left) had to drop out of the tournament after being diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called Sjogren's syndrome.

About four million Americans, mostly women, have this disease where the body attacks its own moisture-producing glands, such as those in the gut, lungs, and mouth, says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D.,

author of the new book *Real Cause, Real Cure* (Rodale Press).

"The main symptom is **sicca syndrome**, or dry eyes and dry mouth," says Teitelbaum. "It can be treated in part by chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free candies to stimulate saliva production."

Sicca syndrome is commonly a symptom of larger diseases that are often missed, such as lupus, **rheumatoid arthritis**, and **fibromyalgia**. "There's a chance that Venus's inability to play could be due to a condition such as fibromyalgia rather than Sjogren's alone, whose main symptom is dry mouth and eyes," says Dr. Teitelbaum. "If she also has widespread pain, fatigue and insomnia, then she probably has another associated disease."

It's estimated that at least 12 million Americans suffer from fibromyalgia, an autoimmune disease that causes a lack of energy and a tightening of the muscles that triggers pain—but about 75% haven't gotten a proper diagnosis.

The good news is that 91% of people improve when treated properly, according to a study in the *Journal of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome*. Dr. Teitelbaum suggests following the SHINE regimen:

1. **Sleep.** Your body produces human growth hormone as you sleep, which is needed for muscle repair and to ease pain. Aim to get at least 8 hours.
2. **Hormonal balance.** Low thyroid function and adrenal fatigue is often linked with fibromyalgia. Dr. Teitelbaum suggests easing symptoms naturally by talking to your doctor about iodine supplements, because the mineral helps produce thyroid hormones. Taking about 6,250 to 12,500 micrograms a day could help, as can eating seafood—especially seaweed and kelp.

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- Infection treatment.** A weakened immune system from autoimmune disorders opens you up to infections such as candida. Try taking probiotics such as Lactobacillus acidophilus to promote a healthy balance of bacteria in your gut.
- Nutritional supplements.** Ribose is a healthful sugar that aids in making the building blocks for cellular energy. People with fibromyalgia who took 5 grams of ribose three times a day reaped a 61 percent boost in energy in just three weeks, according to one study.
- Exercise.** Even though getting a move on may be the last thing you feel like doing, exercise can help with fatigue and chronic joint pain. "Your muscles tighten when you don't exercise, which only leads to even more pain and fatigue," says Dr. Teitelbaum. Overdoing it is not a good thing either. "Learn to listen to your body and gradually work up to an hour of exercise a day, whether that includes yoga stretches or brisk walking."

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